TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION TO

HOUSE BILL 6328

TESTIMONY OF ERIC BROWN
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AFSCME, COUNCIL 15

BEFORE THE LABOR AND PUBLIC EMPLOYEES COMMITTEE, OF THE CONNECTICUT GENERAL ASSEMBLY

FEBRUARY 17, 2011

Ladies and Gentlemen of the Committees, my name is Eric Brown, and I am an attorney and lobbyist with AFSCME Council 15, a labor union representing the interests of more than 4000 police officers in 62 municipal communities throughout Connecticut.

I am here today to speak in opposition to House Bill 6328 – An Act Concerning Timetables for Municipal Binding Arbitration.

This bill is similar to bills which frequently appear before this committee at this time of year. It seems that these bills appear so regularly because there is a group of people out there who think "something has got to be done" about binding arbitration, and this is their attempt to "do something about it."

But there are good reasons why rigid timelines are not adhered to in the arbitration process. The best reason is that binding timelines frustrate efforts to reach agreement through the negotiations process. Once the path is set toward binding arbitration, and the matter must proceed down that road, the likelihood of reaching a negotiated settlement declines.

This is particularly true in police negotiations where we deal with a constituency which, once engaged in a fight, is inclined to finish the fight regardless of the outcome.

Rigid timelines are not necessary to ensure fair and just outcomes in the MERA negotiations process. Rigid timelines are more likely to lead to more arbitrated awards, not fewer. The collective bargaining process is intended to ensure that the parties can reach a negotiated agreement on issues important to both sides. Speeding up the process of arbitration will frustrate our attempts to obtain negotiated agreements.